

Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



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IRAQ: Elections Support Project

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I. SUMMARY

The Elections Support Project (ESP) had several notable accomplishments this reporting period. In the lead-up to the April 30, 2014 Council of Representatives (CoR) elections and the Iraq Kurdistan Region (IKR) Governorate Council Elections (GCE), IFES provided the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) with support in the automated voter registration (AVR) system, accreditation of observers, special needs voting (SNV), and out of country voting (OCV). A series of important workshops were implemented specifically to target many important aspects of election management (see Table 1), and the IFES team played a key support role in ensuring the IHEC's preparations for the elections progressed according to the operational timeline.

The most notable achievements this quarter were the successful conclusion of the voter registration process, the initiating of the AVR process, and the introduction of the electronic cards. IFES played a significant role in all of these processes. Another achievement for this reporting period was the development of a tabulation software for the upcoming CoR elections. The IFES Database Development Advisor (DDA) worked closely with the Head of the IHEC's Data Management Section (DMS) to develop a software capable of parallel processing of three types of results forms: regular voting, SNV, and OCV.

IFES also supported the IHEC in the successful accreditation of political entities (PEs) agents, observers, and local media by providing a two-session workshop on accreditation procedures in early March.

Throughout the reporting period, IFES provided international stakeholders with key analytical information on the electoral context and process, including legal changes. IFES authored and released a briefing paper on the CoR elections explaining the electoral system and process, which serves as a primary comprehensive summary of the CoR elections. IFES also conducted a number of briefings on the CoR and IKR GC elections, including a presentation for USAID and US Embassy staff on Iraq's electoral system, the elections legal framework, preparations for the upcoming elections, and the AVR process.

In addition, IFES issued three sub-grants supporting voter education efforts for the April 30 elections as part of its second round of sub-grants. The grants were issued to the Al-Manahil Association for Women Development working in Basrah, the Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development (FUAD) working in Kirkuk, and the South Youth Organization working in Dhi Qar.

Table 1: IFES-facilitated Trainings and Workshops, January 01 – March 31, 2014.

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	# of Female Participants	NO/GEO Participant Distribution
Jan. 6 - 10	Erbil	Strategic Communications Workshop	30	3	10/20
Jan. 21 - 24	Erbil	Out of Country Voting Workshop Session 1	24	3	20/4
Jan. 27	Erbil	IFES Sub-grants Compliance Training for the Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development	3	2	0*
Jan. 25 - 28	Erbil	Out of Country Voting Workshop Session 2	25	4	16/9
Jan. 27 - 29	Erbil	Electoral Budget Preparations Workshop	28	3	8/20
Feb. 2	Baghdad	IFES Sub-grants Compliance Training for the Al-Manahil Association for Women Development	2	0	0*
Feb. 3	Baghdad	IFES Sub-grants Compliance Training for the South Youth Organization	2	1	0*
Feb. 2 - 6	Baghdad	Local Election Observation Workshop Session 1	24	9	3/0*
Feb. 9 - 13	Baghdad	Local Election Observation Workshop Session 2	24	9	3/0*
Mar. 2 - 3	Erbil	Training on Media and Observers Accreditation Procedures	23	8	3/20
Mar. 4 - 5	Erbil	Training on Political Entity Agents Accreditation Procedures	25	4	3/22
Mar. 27 - 28	Erbil	Complaints Procedures Workshop Session 1	27	2	8/19

Mar. 29 - 30	Erbil	Complaints Procedures Workshop Session 2	30	8	15/15
Mar. 27 - 29	Erbil	Training of Trainers for Media Workshop	10	2	5/5
Total workshop participants			277	58	94/134

* Participants were from NGOs.

II. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL CONTEXT

Security

During this reporting period, Iraq experienced a sustained level of escalated violence. Turmoil in Anbar first intensified in December 2013 when Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki deployed special forces to dismantle a protest camp in Ramadi, the province's capital, and arrested a group of local politicians. This led to outright conflict between the predominantly Shia security forces and predominantly Sunni locals, some of whom are allied with the al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic State of Iraq and Sham, better known as ISIS. Failing to meet local demands for political and judicial reform and better public services in Anbar, Maliki and his government have portrayed the protesters simply as a front for al-Qaeda.

In January, violence further escalated when militants and anti-government fighters seized the city of Fallujah and parts of Ramadi, Anbar's capital city. Since then, government security forces have retaken control of most of Ramadi, but militants remain in control of Fallujah. Thus far security forces have not launched an assault to retake control of Fallujah for fear of extensive civilian casualties and further protest from the Sunni-dominated area.

Anbar was one of two governorates that saw the 2013 GCE postponed due to escalations in violence around the elections. To date, there has been no decision to postpone the 2014 CoR elections in the region.

Election Preparation

The reporting period was marked by intense preparations for the upcoming CoR elections and IKR GCE scheduled for April 30, 2014. The CoR elections will be held for 328 seats in all of Iraq's 18 governorates. The newly-elected members of the CoR will then elect the President within 30 days from the first convening of the CoR. Out-of-country voting is scheduled to take place from April 29-30 in 19 countries. Special voting will take place on April 28 to accommodate voting for Iraqi Security Forces.

According to the new electoral law – the CoR Elections Law No. 45 of 2013 passed by the CoR in November 2013 – an open list system will be used in this election. Under this electoral system, a voter may select both a political entity and a specific candidate within a list, or select a political entity only. The system will use the 18 governorates as the constituencies. The counting system has been changed slightly from the largest remainder method to the modified Sainte-Laguë method due to a ruling by the Supreme Court that stated the previous method discriminated against smaller parties.

The use of the Sainte-Laguë method means that seats will be distributed among the candidates on the open list. The seats are first allocated to participating political entities based on the number of valid votes received. The candidates within each open list will then be re-ranked based on the number of votes obtained by each. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes within the open list shall be deemed the winner and so on for the remainder of candidates. Based on the women's quota system in the CoR—that women's representation in parliament should be 25 percent—a woman candidate is assured to be elected after each three winning men. Political entities must also ensure that 25% of candidates on their list are women.

Seven compensatory seats that were awarded at the national level in the previous CoR elections to parties whose national share of the vote was not reflected in the seats won at the governorate level have been allocated to individual governorates. Eight seats remain reserved for minority groups at the national level, including five seats allocated to Christians in Baghdad, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Dohuk, Erbil; one seat to Yazidis in Ninewa; one seat to Sabeen Mandeans in Baghdad; and one seat for Shabaks in Ninewa.

CoR Election Candidate Registration

The candidate registration process was finalized at the start of the reporting period. On January 1, the IHEC extended the period for submitting political entities' and coalitions' list of candidates for the CoR elections from January 3 to January 9. Due to the security situation, the IHEC extended the submission of the candidate lists for the Anbar governorate until January 15. A total of 9,453 candidates were submitted by political entities. Of these, approximately 2,400 candidates were women. All candidate names were submitted to the Justice and Accountability Commission on January 20, 2014 for vetting.

After the ballot position lottery on January 29, 2014, the IHEC announced that 107 total political entities will contest the elections. In March, the IHEC announced that a total of 9,040 candidates with 2,612 women candidates were approved to run in the elections.

The largest parties on the approved list include the Prime Minister's State of Law Coalition, the Sadrist Movement (Ahrar), the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and the Iraqi National Accord. Significant new parties include the former militant group Asa'ib Ahl al-Hag and the White Iraqiya Bloc, which split from the Iraqi National Accord.

Introduction of Automated Voter Registration

Over the course of this quarter, the IHEC continued the process of introducing technology to the electoral process. Following the Board of Commissioners decision to implement an AVR system to prevent fraud and improve accuracy of the voter list, the IHEC proceeded with implementation of the first stage of the process.

Automated voter registration (AVR) is the process of registering voters using biometric information and subsequent use of this data for removal of duplications from the voter list and voter identification. In the long-term, as biometric registration proceeds, the need for paper-based identification decreases.

Due to general time constraints of launching a new and complex system, it was not feasible to register 21.5 million voters using AVR prior to the April 30, 2014 elections. Therefore, the process

has been executed in two stages. The first stage of the implementation, which started in January 2014, includes implementation of the system; manufacture and distribution of electronic cards; and use of electronic cards in the CoR elections in conjunction with existing paper-based identification systems. The first stage will culminate in the CoR elections, and also includes biometric registration of civil servants and the IHEC employees from January 01 to February 20. Only registered IHEC employees (including temporary employees) will be allowed to work during Election Day.

Figure 1 Biometric Registration Kit



The second stage, which is the continued electronic registration of voters and extended public outreach campaign, will start in June 2014 and will continue for approximately four years until all Iraqi voters are registered in the new system. The IHEC's objective is to have the AVR system completed in time for the 2018 CoR elections.

The IHEC also proceeded with distribution of the electronic cards during the reporting period. Only the data from the existing voter registration database was used in the production of the cards, and they do not yet contain biometric information such as fingerprints or facial information. This card is used to locate the voter record in the polling station verification device. As biometric information is collected during the registration process which will start in June 2014, it will also be stored on the verification devices. Voter identity will be directly verified by processing voter biometrics against stored information in the polling kit devices. Where the device does not have biometric information, traditional identification methods may be used. However, the possession of the new electronic card is a condition for this validation to take place.

Only voters who have an electronic card will be able to vote during the 2014 CoR elections. If a voter loses his/her card, she/he would not be allowed to vote. However, if the card is partially destroyed, she/he would still be allowed to cast a ballot. The Iraqi diaspora participating in OCV would not need the electronic cards. There will be three types of cards: white for regular voters, maroon marked with an "S" for the members of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) participating in the SNV, and white cards marked with the letter "M" issued to internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The electronic cards will be active only for Election Day from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and will be deactivated for 30 days after being used to vote. They cannot be used to vote twice. Previously, if voters had been in line by the close of voting, they would be allowed to vote. This is no longer the case as the verification device will only be programmed to work between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. People will not be able to vote even if they are in line on time, which is why voting hours were extended from 10 to 11 hours.

The status of distribution of electronic cards as of April 1 indicates that over 15 million cards have been distributed (see Table 2). The numbers also show that distribution level in Anbar and Salah Al-Din governorates have been consistently low. The IHEC decided to increase the number of distribution centers in Anbar from 74 to 148. The distribution period will end on April 20.

**Table 2: Total Number of Distributed Electronic Cards
as of April 1, 2014.**

GEO code	GEO name	Number of distribution centers	Total number of cards for general election	Number of distributed cards for general election	% of total cards distributed	Total number of cards for SNV	Number of distributed cards for SNV	% of total cards distributed
1	Basrah	107	1,611,856	1,165,320	72.30%	63,479	52,442	82.61%
4	Missan	41	605,035	486,246	80.37%	26,647	26,322	98.78%
5	Qadissiya	42	662,156	579,290	87.49%	19,866	19,866	100.00%
6	Thi-Qar	56	1,075,857	821,480	76.36%	34,633	30,226	87.28%
12	Najaf	33	768,519	621,797	80.91%	27,578	26,883	97.48%
14	Muthanna	29	419,112	336,019	80.17%	18,473	17,609	95.32%
21	Baghdad Rusafa	134	2,768,199	2,109,043	76.19%	116,459	90,897	78.05%
22	Baghdad Karkh	123	2,140,218	1,591,176	74.35%	155,334	124,456	80.12%
23	Diyala	82	887,586	738,112	83.16%	48,997	45,695	93.26%
24	Anbar	148	384,251	206,439	53.73%	63,417	33,074	52.15%
25	Wassit	42	690,514	562,151	81.41%	27,422	25,977	94.73%
26	Kerbala	57	617,463	507,659	82.22%	25,376	24,079	94.89%
27	Babil	72	1,049,698	874,031	83.26%	31,236	29,991	96.01%
28	Dahuk	65	607,991	468,139	77.00%	29,377	27,743	94.44%
31	Erbil	77	958,619	710,328	74.10%	81,400	75,491	92.74%
32	Sulaymaniyah	85	1,161,588	850,628	73.23%	71,142	60,424	84.93%
33	Salah Al-Din	38	770,351	499,615	64.86%	44,454	36,764	82.70%
34	Kirkuk	43	833,875	697,558	83.65%	35,379	34,267	96.86%
35	Ninewa	140	1,849,335	1,375,752	74.39%	86,582	74,392	85.92%
Total		1414	19,862,223	15,200,783	76.53%	1,007,251	856,598	85.04%

Establishment of Polling Centers and Stations

The IHEC has established 8,642 polling centers (PCs) and 51,403 polling stations (PSs), including 48,765 regular PSs, 81 conditional voting PSs, and 2,557 SNV PSs. Voting in regular centers will take place in accordance with the final voter list. There are 21,503,891 total voters on the final voter list.

Using information submitted by the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the IHEC created a special voter list. The list contains approximately 1,023,829 voters working

for the armed forces and the police who will get an opportunity to vote on April 28, 2014. The names of these voters have been removed from the final voter list. There will be 532 PCs and 2,557 PSs established for SNV.

Conditional voting allows voters not included on a voter list to cast a ballot and to have their ballot conditionally accepted while the IHEC verifies their eligibility. The IHEC BoC limited conditional voting to hospitals and prisons only. In March, the IHEC issued a decision to allow IDPs from Anbar and voters who were not able to collect an electronic card to vote conditionally due to constraints stemming from the security situation in this governorate. The strict document requirements including a photo ID and the food ration card issued in 2013 and 2014 were introduced for this conditional voting category.

Iraqis living abroad who are qualified to vote will be able to do so through the OCV based on their identified place of origin. The IHEC opened 14 country offices in the following countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and United States of America. Additionally, five polling centers will be opened in Austria, France, New Zealand, Norway, and Spain.¹

As of March 31, the IHEC confirmed the opening of 103 PCs and 655 PSs for OCV as per the table below.

Table 3: Total Number of Polling Stations and Polling Centers for OCV 2014 as of March 31, 2014.

OCV Country Offices		Cities	Polling Centers	Polling Stations
1	Iran	10	18	60
2	USA	7	9	60
3	Germany/France/Spain/Austria	7	7	57
4	UK	4	5	59
5	Netherlands	1	2	28
6	Australia / New Zealand	6	9	32
7	Sweden/Norway	5	9	81
8	Turkey	2	4	30
9	Jordan	4	14	96
10	Lebanon	5	5	25
11	Canada	4	9	34
12	UAE	3	3	40
13	Denmark	4	4	21
14	Egypt	3	5	32
Total		65	103	655

¹ The polling centers are managed by the country offices to which they are assigned (I.E., Sweden manages the polling center in Norway).

IKR GEC Elections

Simultaneously, the IHEC conducted preparations for the IKR GCE which have been postponed since April 20, 2013. They will be held together with the CoR elections on April 30, 2014. Ninety seats in three governorate councils of Erbil, Dahuk, and Sulaymaniyah will be up for elections in an open list system as stipulated in the Law No. 4 of 2009 on Governorate, District and Sub-District Council Elections in the Iraq Kurdistan Region. The seat allocation formula uses the electoral divider method, according to which the number of valid votes received by all political entities competing for the general seats will be totaled, and then divided by the number of available seats, with the remainder of seats awarded to the highest winning party. There are nine seats for minority components, and 30 percent of candidates must be women.

The registration period for political entities had to be divided in two periods, due to initial slow participation. The first period was from August 18 until September 25, 2013, with the second from December 24, 2013 until January 09, 2014. The candidates' nomination process ended on January 09, 2014 with 18 certified political entities listing a total of 718 candidates. All candidate names were submitted to the Iraq Kurdistan Ministry of Interior (IK MoI) for verification to determine eligibility. Once potential candidates were vetted through the IK MoI, they were put forth for approval by the IHEC. The IHEC later announced that 713 candidates, including 224 women candidates, were approved to run in the elections.

The IHEC established 1,372 PCs including 1,275 regular PCs and 97 special need voting PCs to serve 2.7 million voters. The IHEC will open a total of 7,211 PSs, including 6,754 regular PSs and 457 SNV PSs.

Dispute Over Candidate Registration Requirements

On March 19, the CoR passed a decision concerning Article 8.3 of the Election Law No. 45 of 2013, which stipulated that a candidate for the CoR elections "must be known for his good conduct and not convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude." The CoR decided that due to a possibility of statutory interpretation of this article, both conditions of good conduct and non-conviction should be applied as one requirement. Accordingly, the CoR instructed the IHEC not to further disqualify any candidate unless both conditions exist, and not bar any candidates unless they have criminal convictions. This decision was at odds with that of the Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP). Dozens of candidates were disqualified by the EJP because they were subjects of arrest warrants. Based on this article, the EJP has barred several prospective lawmakers, including some Maliki opponents, such as former finance minister Rafa al-Essawi, with no obvious avenue of appeal.

The IHEC thus faced substantial pressure stemming from the conflict between the CoR and the EJP over decisions issued by both sides. Each side believed that the IHEC was mandated to implement their decisions, despite the fact that they were contradictory.

On March 25, the IHEC Commissioners submitted their resignation letters to the BoC Chairman in a protest against different interpretation of the law and political and judicial interference. The joint decision was made to preserve the independence and impartiality of the IHEC. The BoC Chairman stated that the IHEC has only disqualified candidates based on the EJP or the Accountability and Justice Commission (AJC) decisions. The decision was perceived as a message

to the two authorities not to interfere in the IHEC work, and that the independence of the Commission must be preserved.

On March 30, the IHEC Commissioners formally withdrew their resignations and expressed appreciation for all the requests to withdraw resignation coming from the national and international stakeholders considering it as testimony for their independence and professionalism.

Consequently, on March 31, the IHEC announced the accreditation of the list of 9,040 candidates for the CoR elections and 713 for the IKR GCE. The analysis of the final list of the approved political entities published by the IHEC shows that out of the total 277 entities initially ratified by the IHEC, there were 32 withdrawals, 112 (49.3%) new entities never registered with the IHEC before, and 14 individual candidates registration, including three women. The campaign period started on April 1 and will end 24 hours before Election Day.

Election Observation

The IHEC sent invitations to over 260 embassies and international organizations as well as to the local organizations and media to observe the upcoming elections. As of April 1, the IHEC has accredited 19,036 political entities (PEs) agents, 21,168 local observers, 684 international observers, 137 international media and 726 local media. The IHEC will conduct two seminars to explain the electoral system and procedures for the international observers and media, the first taking place in Erbil on April 17, and the second in Baghdad on April 24.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Objective 1: IHEC's Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Capacity is Strengthened

Activity 1.1.2: Development of a "Strategic Planning Master Plan"

Developments in this activity have been limited due to the busy electoral schedule. During this reporting period, IFES met with the IHEC Chairman and the Commissioner responsible for finalizing the IHEC strategic plan. The BoC decided to focus on two areas included in the draft of the strategic document: conducting a performance evaluation of all the IHEC staff at the National Office (NO) and the Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) to evaluate if they are qualified to hold their current positions, and an evaluation of the cost/benefit of purchasing the IHEC's own printing equipment to be installed at the NO. The Commissioner confirmed that the IHEC is on track with other activities that have been a part of the strategic plan draft agreed on, which include the implementation and use of the electronic cards, and strengthening of the Data Entry Center (DEC), in which IFES has been a key partner. Most of the strategic planning discussions and activities are on hold until after the CoR elections, after which the IHEC is expected to be able to quickly finalize the strategic planning process. In the meantime, the Strategic Planning Committee remains operational, with follow-up meetings scheduled for early Q2FY14.

Activity 1.2: Support Development of Operational Plans for Electoral Events

IFES provided technical expertise and operational support for the CoR elections and IKR GC electoral operations this past quarter. A series of workshops focused on critical aspects of electoral operations, including OCV planning, electoral budget preparations, election observation, accreditation, and complaints procedures took place.

The IHEC requested IFES to conduct a training workshop for the newly-appointed OCV country managers before their deployment. The first workshop was held in Erbil on January 21-24 and attended by 24 participants. The second workshop took place on January 25-28 in Erbil and was attended by 25 participants. The workshop focused on the operation procedures, establishing country offices, recruitment, and training of local staff. The Finance and Audit Departments Directors took the lead on the financial side, focusing on banking transactions, contractual regulations, and reporting requirements. The workshop was very successful in providing essential information on the procedures to the participants with no previous experience in the OCV or in electoral operations in general.

The IFES Senior Elections Planning Advisor (SEPA) has been working very closely with the IHEC on the OCV operations. He assisted the IHEC OCV Unit Manager in preparation for the Ambassadors and the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of hosting countries conference held February 14-15 in Istanbul. The SEPA developed the agenda and prepared specific topics for discussions. He provided assistance to the OCV Unit in compiling reports from the country offices and developed a status report to the IHEC administration. He also worked with the IT Section to identify a dedicated server for the OCV and to establish an FTP host server to receive the elections results. Finally, he assisted the Voter Registration Section (VRS) in preparing the statistics, such as polling station data, required by the AVR vendor to program the verification device.

IFES proposed to conduct an Election Operation Planning workshop for the IHEC after the completion of the operations implementation plan and timeline. The workshop intended to invite all the general directors in the IHEC and the GEOs Managers to review the plan and discuss the roles and responsibilities for each director. After obtaining all the approvals for the workshop a number of GEO managers requested the date of the workshop to be postponed due to a busy schedule. Therefore, the IHEC decided to conduct a one-day operational meeting on January 28 to review the operational plan according to the concept developed by IFES. The meeting provided the opportunity for the GEOs Managers to voice their concerns and identify possible challenges they may face. The summary and recommendations from the meeting were submitted to the BoC to address the challenges early.

As the distribution of the electronic voter cards started, the BoC requested the Operations Department (OD) to start researching the options for electronic voting. IFES SEPA developed a recommendation paper for the Operations Director to assist him in this task. The paper demonstrated the different types of electronic voting technologies available and technical requirements to implement such a project.

Due to the security situation in the Anbar governorate and the increasing number of IDPs, IFES developed and submitted recommendations to the IHEC OD to ensure that a plan is developed to accommodate the participation of IDPs in the voting process. The recommendations included two options: to conduct voter registration for the IDPs to identify their numbers and locations, or to

open special polling centers for IDPs to vote conditionally. The Operations Director endorsed IFES' recommendations and the BoC made a decision to adopt the second option and to open 112 PSs for the Anbar's IDPs conditional voting in 11 governorates.

Objective 2: IHEC's Internal Management Processes and Systems are Strengthened

Activity 2.1: Support to the IHEC's IT Systems and Infrastructure

IFES continued providing technical support to the IHEC IT and Database Sections in this reporting period by delivering assistance on the voter registration database and results tabulation software for the upcoming elections. IFES assisted in optimizing certain software procedures and resolved a number of software bugs. As a result, the voter registration update software was finalized, tested, and deployed to the production environment. Testing of the results tabulation software is ongoing through Election Day.

IFES assisted the IHEC in troubleshooting a series of database issues pertaining to the elections. IFES helped DMS staff to resolve an issue with the voter registration update software that was not discovered during the testing period. The bug in the software allowed for bypassing the double entry for barcode in order to open the form for editing. The bug was addressed and a new version of the software was deployed. Thus, the issue was resolved and data entry continued and was successfully completed. Additionally, IFES' Advisor helped to address database performance related issues for the electronic card receipt forms. The improvement in the software ensured the smooth data entry operations at the Data Entry Center (DEC). IFES Advisors also assisted in conducting maintenance of the DEC server infrastructure and software prior to the beginning of the results tabulation software testing at the DEC.

IFES' Advisor presented the idea of using a protected barcode for the form identification, processing and, tracking instead of using the PC/PS number for results tabulation software. IFES suggested the DMS to implement barcode protection algorithms to avoid data entry mistakes in the processing of the result forms and presented several algorithms used to generate check-digits to avoid mistyping of the series of numbers. The idea was adopted by the IHEC. IFES' Advisor worked together with the DMS software developers to implement the barcode protection algorithm. IFES also suggested changing the structure of the results forms barcode to include a digit for the form type.

In January and February, IFES' SEPA supported the DEC Manager in establishing a plan for receiving and processing the OCV results from OCV countries. The DEC will need to allocate a dedicated server and setup a group of terminals in an area where the results can be processed. Also, special modifications must be completed in the results data entry program to adjust for the OCV results forms.

In February, IFES' Database/IT Management Consultant started exploring options for the technological aspect of the OCV. Once the OCV is closed, the data from all the OCV countries will be transferred to the IHEC National Office (NO) for review and approval. The Consultant presented the available IT system options for the transfer of data for the IHEC to choose a specific IT data transfer system.

The IHEC conducted a results tabulation workshop in Erbil on February 3-5 to discuss and plan for the election result counting and tallying process for the upcoming election. The workshop was organized and funded by the IHEC, and attended by the DEC, Training and Procedures Section, Database Section, and Audit and Logistics Section staff. IFES Advisors participated in the workshop and provided input and advice where necessary. During the workshop, the polling and counting procedures for regular voting, SNV, and OCV were presented and discussed. The work of the counting and sorting centers was discussed, followed by a presentation and discussion of the DEC audit procedures and software. The interface of the tabulation software and forms workflow was also presented. IFES participated in discussions regarding the results tabulation forms and procedures, related to the DEC and tabulation software. In particular, IFES suggested to simplify the data entry of the forms and to omit the fields not relevant to results tabulation and verification in order to speed up the delivery of the results. IFES Advisors also suggested to have audit triggers, related to form balance check, separate from the anti-fraud trigger and to have a flexible margin of error in the formulas used to check the balancing of the form. Finally, IFES Advisors suggested developing an interactive visual tool for audit software in order to simplify the work of auditors and highlight the problematic fields on the form.

The Database/IT Management Consultant worked with the Kurdistan Regional Elections Office (KREO) IT, Voter Registration, and Operation Sections to identify priorities and discuss the IT system required for successful conduct of the upcoming IKR GCE. The KREO purchased new computers configured to host an SQL server and to run the existing database, which is mainly intended for the special voting and help desks system. He assisted in the installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting of MS SQL server database required for the help desk computers and special voting database.

IFES' Database/IT Management consultant also worked with KREO's Database and Voter Registration staff to study and analyze the IT system used for SNV data. The Microsoft Excel sheets are used as the primary tool at the KREO to collect and disseminate the SNV information among the partners. The entire SNV data collection, data processing, and data dissemination has been reviewed to identify improvement areas. As part of this study, discussions took place to analyze the feasibility of a new web-based software development aimed at automating and simplify the exchange of information among the KREO and its partners. A prototype aimed at development of a web-based system to facilitate the exchange of SNV data was developed. The main objective of the prototype was to clearly demonstrate how the development of such a web-based system can improve the data collection, data processing, and data dissemination. The KREO has long been following a four steps process for collecting, integrating, and disseminating the SNV data, which includes sending the latest SNV list, mainly in Microsoft Excel format to relevant ministries when the voter registration update process opens; the ministries check the list and incorporate any changes or addition and resubmit the list to the KREO; the KREO and the IHEC then integrate the lists and perform numerous data validation and checks; finally the list after being processed at the IHEC is sent back to the ministries.

The IFES Consultant also commenced the development work on SNV website database. The system back-end and structure, including tables, relationships and database was developed. The

development of user interface and the actual screens that users will see was also finalized. The application was fully hard coded and operational, yet pending the KREOs approval for installation.

Activity 2.2: Capacity Building Support to the IHEC's Database and Software Developers and Staff

The IFES Database Development Advisor (DDA) worked closely with the Head of the Data Management Section (DMS) on development of the tabulation software for the upcoming elections. The DMS is developing a software capable of parallel processing of three types of results forms: regular, SNV, and OCV. IFES provided on-the-job training in designing forms for data entry using Adobe Photoshop, HTML, and CSS for new staff members at the DMS.

In addition, the DDA held discussions with the DMS and Data Entry Center (DEC) staff to implement barcode protection in order to avoid data entry mistakes in the processing of the result forms concerning the proposed barcode to be used for form processing and tracking; this barcode will replace the PC/PS number that has been used in the past (see Activity 2.1 for more details).

The latest version of the tabulation software and database were reviewed and compatibility issues will be fixed in order to allow the software to run in Microsoft Internet Explorer. The preliminary version of the software is being finalized and prepared for testing at the DEC. Reinstallation of the servers at DEC has started the last week of March, along with server and antivirus software, according to plan. Installation and configuration of the database software will take place beginning of April, followed with deployment of the database and software for testing.

Finally, the DDA assisted the DEC staff in the setup of the scanning software used to scan voters' electronic cards receipts for archiving and verification purposes. He also worked with the DMS and DEC staff on the deployment and optimization of the software and database for the data entry of the receipts, and helped to identify the source of the performance issues in the database. The DDA identified the database connection pooling as the source of the problem, and proposed changes in database connection string, which fully resolved the issue.

In addition, IFES continued its daily assistance to the DMS staff, especially to new staff members, conducting working sessions to assist in addressing technical issues faced during development and deployment of the various types of IHEC in-house software, as well as continued to provide on-the-job trainings on HTML, CSS, basic Photoshop, JavaScript, jQuery, and T-SQL.

The IFES Database/IT Management Consultant also worked with KREO's Database/Voter Registration Sections with the installation and maintenance of MS SQL server database required for the help desk and special voting database. He continuously assisted the KREO's Database/Voter Registration Sections with troubleshooting of SQL Server Database.

Activity 2.3: Support Improvements to Voter Registration (VR) Processes

IFES provided technical expertise on the AVR process, as well as on the broader electoral operations this past quarter. This expertise was provided in the context of introduction of the new technology into the elections and direct preparations for the upcoming elections.

Activity 2.3.2: Support Operational Planning for Voter Registration Activities

In preparation for the 2014 elections, the IHEC used two approaches to update the voter registry. The first was by obtaining an updated Public Distribution System (PDS) database from the Ministry of Trade (MoT) and conducting a comparative analysis. The second was to conduct a voter registration update through opening 1,079 Voter Registration Centers (VRCs), allowing voters to check and update their registration information. IFES' SEP Advisor worked closely with the IHEC Training and Procedures Section to develop the registration procedures and training materials for the VRCs staff. The IHEC, with IFES assistance, updated and verified more than 13 million records on the voter registry.

The AVR project currently being implemented in Iraq is, in effect, a two stage project. The first stage will culminate in the CoR elections. Due to general time constraints of launching a new and complex system, it was not feasible to register the 21.5 million voters using AVR. Thus, the first stage of the implementation is the implementation of the system, the manufacture and distribution of electronic cards, and their use in the 2014 CoR elections in conjunction with existing paper-based identification systems. In the longer term, as biometric registration proceeds, the need for paper-based identification will fall away. The second stage will start in June 2014 with continuous automated voter registration of 21.5 million Iraqi voters which should be completed before 2018 CoR elections.

In the short term (i.e., before the CoR elections), electronic de-duplication will not have taken place and duplicate entries may still exist on the database. This can be controlled by the use of indelible ink and by rigorous inspection of documentation. However, most of the new system functions will have been tested, validating the financial outlay in purchasing the system.

During the first quarter of 2014, the IHEC's prime concern was preparing for the CoR elections. The decision that the new electronic card is a mandatory enabling document means that the logistics of distributing the new cards, particularly in the light of the instability in western regions, was one of the main challenges facing the IHEC. Cards arrived in Iraq in two batches: the first towards the end of January, and the second towards the end of February. Unrest in the western regions has meant that a number of cards have not been distributed, and as of the writing of this report, polling will take place in Anbar with all polling centers and stations open for operation.

During the period under review, IFES has been involved with monitoring the implementation of the AVR project and advising on potential issues. Since the task of implementation is the responsibility of the vendor, the role of IFES is purely to determine potential issues, such as the issue created by the IHEC requirement to prove the authenticity of the ballot paper before use. The selected solution relies on the existence of a printed barcode on the ballot paper, raising the question of potential for linking the ballot to the voter. The IHEC accepted, and is implementing, the IFES recommendation for a third-party audit by an accredited audit institution of the relevant systems to show that this linking is not taking place. While the IHEC does not wish to raise this

issue, nor publically accept its existence, the audit delivers a measure of confidence, acting as a first line of defense should the issue be forced.

IFES has acted in an advisory capacity in the issue of deployment of hardware as well. With a clear understanding of the risks of untested equipment on polling day, IFES strongly advised a full testing schedule of the equipment prior to this time. It has been confirmed that this testing is being done.

IFES has supported the IHEC initiatives in long term strategic and capacity planning through the presentation of reports in the previous reporting period. It is expected that, with the elections preparation out of the way, these issues will again receive more attention in the next reporting period.

Activity 2.3.4: Advise the IHEC on the Implementation of Continuous Voter Registration Process and Decentralized Data Entry for Voter Registration

During this reporting period, IFES has continued to support the IHEC AVR project. IFES SEP Advisor developed recommendations to the Operations Department to adopt continuous voter registration. IFES also developed and presented to the IHEC a white paper on continuous registration implementation requirements. The IHEC agreed to conduct a workshop, after the elections, to discuss the recommendations and requirements and to put an operational plan in place. IFES' recommendations will serve as the agenda and baseline for the workshop.

Activity 2.4: Support to the IHEC's Internal Communication and Reporting Structures

In February, the IFES Electoral Legal Advisor (ELA), the Database Development Advisor (DDA), and the Organizational Management Specialist (OMS) developed "The IHEC Internal Communication Mapping and Recommendations" report. This is an internal document and it will form a baseline for future activities planning process. The document describes the current communication structure within the IHEC NO and between the NO and GEOs. It provides a set of recommendations that IFES Advisors will advocate for while working with the IHEC counterparts, especially on the strategic planning process.

Activity 2.5: Support to the IHEC Directorates of Finance and Administration with the Introduction of Financial Controls, Accounting, and Finance Systems.

Due to the busy pre-election environment during this reporting period, the majority of the organizational development and capacity building activities not directly related to the elections were put on hold by the IHEC.

However, IFES conducted a workshop on electoral budget preparations on January 27-29, with participants from the IHEC NO, GEOs, and KREO Finance Units. The workshop was headed by the IHEC Finance Department Director, and was supported by the IFES Organizational Management Advisor (OMA) and the IHEC trainers. Practical exercises were conducted to separate the elections budget from the operational budget and to manage additional costs related, among others, to the AVR process. The outcome of the workshop was a comprehensive

mechanism designed specifically to effectively manage the elections budget leading up to the CoR elections.

Activity 2.8: Implementation of a Comprehensive Electoral Training Curriculum Based on the BRIDGE Curriculum.

IFES' Electoral Legal Advisor (ELA) and Organizational Management Specialist (OMS) assisted the IHEC in preparation and conduct of the Electoral Observation Workshop in Baghdad, which used the BRIDGE methodology and materials. The two sessions took place on February 2-6 and February 9-13. The workshops were organized by the IHEC and targeted the local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) participating as local observers during the upcoming CoR elections. IFES Advisors assisted the IHEC with preparation of the training materials and delivered presentations on the following topics: international standards for elections observation; importance of the electoral observation and types of observers; effective observations reporting; and the role of observers. The presentations included case studies from other countries and group exercises to make the sessions more participatory. An IHEC Commissioner delivered the opening speech, which encouraged the NGOs representatives to educate Iraqi voters on their rights and duties with special focus on the importance of collecting the electronic cards as a prerequisite for participation in the elections. A total of 20 participants from various NGOs participated in the first workshop and 25 NGOs attended the second workshop.



Figure 2: Electoral Observation Workshop, February 2-6 and February 9-13, 2014

IFES also submitted a proposal to implement a number of BRIDGE trainings to the Capacity Building Department (CBD). The proposed BRIDGE trainings will focus on the GEOs staff and aim to train more than 810 GEOs staff members.

2.9.2 Review of the IHEC's Anti-fraud Mechanisms and Proposals of New Mechanisms to Detect and Deter Fraud

Building on the success of the past trainings on anti-fraud measures, in cooperation with the IHEC, IFES conducted the 2014 CoR Elections Complaints Procedures workshop in two sessions on March 27-28 and March 29-30. The events brought 27 participants, in the first session and 30 participants in the second session, including 10 women, from the GEOs Complaints Units and the IHEC Legal Consultation and Complaints Sections.



Figure 3: The 2014 CoR Elections Complaints Procedures workshop (March 27-28, 2014)

The IFES Electoral Legal Advisor (ELA), designed the training program, and prepared the agenda and materials. He also delivered the core presentations concerning the investigation mechanisms and the new technology introduced by the IHEC for the 2014 CoR elections.

Specifically, the workshop aimed to enhance the capacity of the staff by increasing their efficiency in managing the upcoming elections complaints process. This workshop not only aimed to serve the immediate needs of the IHEC, but also to continue building sustainable initiatives in combating electoral fraud during future elections.

The workshop aimed to achieve the following objectives: provide the investigation staff who newly joined the Complaints Units with necessary knowledge to process the electoral complaints; explain the impact of the electronic cards introduction on complaints investigation; explain the internal communications between the NO, the KREO, and IKR GEOs in terms of complaints adjudication processes; explain the process of receiving and processing the complaints; explain how to use the complaints database.

The workshop successfully provided the participants with information necessary to process the complaints and contributed directly to the IHEC efforts to detect and combat the electoral fraud and build the capacity of the IHEC legal staff.

The ELA also worked with the IHEC's Legal Consultations and Complaints Section on the CoR elections and the OCV complaints procedures. The Advisor suggested amendments to the draft procedures and the finalized document was sent to the BoC, which was finally approved in March.

Objective 3: IHEC Capacity to Manage External Affairs with Key External Stakeholders is Improved

IFES continued its technical assistance to the IHEC to improve its ability to engage external stakeholders. Notable achievements this quarter included the development and approval of the Strategic Communications Plan and training of journalists before the upcoming elections.

Activity 3.2: Conduct of National Surveys

During this quarter, IFES initiated the procurement process for a survey company to conduct the second national survey gauging public opinion and knowledge about the electoral process with a special focus on voters' experience with the CoR election as well as the electronic voter cards.

The procurement process for the survey company will be finalized in early April 2014 along with the draft survey questionnaire, which will be shared with the IHEC for their input and comments. The anticipated period for the fieldwork will be May 25 through June 30, 2014, with the final survey report anticipated at the end of July. The findings will be shared with both the IHEC and USAID.

The results will be particularly interesting and informative for the IHEC's AVR process and how the IHEC would need to adjust outreach to address voters' perceptions of and experience with the electronic voter card.

In February, the IHEC Capacity Building Department (CBD) proposed conducting a survey to be funded by IFES. IFES responded that it is in the process of undertaking its second survey to measure the public's comprehension and opinion on the electoral process, and instead, offered to assist the IHEC by sharing its questionnaire to incorporate into the survey, just as IFES did for the first round survey. IFES also proposed that the IHEC identify staffers who would like to observe the training of the survey staff for educational purposes.

Activity 3.3.1: Development of a Strategic Communications Plan

The credibility of the IHEC as the institution for managing elections depends on its ability to proactively present itself to the media and to other stakeholders. To enhance its ability to do so, IFES Advisors have worked with the IHEC on a Strategic Communications Plan.

On January 7-9, 2014, IFES held the Strategic Communications Workshop in Erbil. Participants were comprised mostly of Unit Heads from the GEOs and the IHEC NO Public Outreach Departments (POD). The objective of the workshop was to introduce the concept of the communications strategy and strategic planning methodology to the GEOs Managers and senior staff in the POD, particularly in the context of the AVR education campaign being largely devolved to the GEOs for implementation.

The interactive sessions conducted by the IFES External Relations Advisor (ERA) included strategic planning methodology, including the log frame, risk planning, stakeholder analysis, and management. The feedback from these sessions informed the next draft of the communications strategy completed by the Communications Strategy Committee (CSC), formed by the IHEC to codify an official communications strategy. An IHEC Commissioner led a discussion on the need for a strategic communications plan. In addition, another Commissioner gave a two hour presentation on the AVR project that clarified and highlighted a number of communications issues for the participants. Elements of the draft strategic communications plan were presented and discussed by the participants. Discussion during these sessions provided the IFES ERA the opportunity to update the plan before it was presented to the BoC.

Activity 3.4: Capacity Building Training in the Design, Implementation and Conduct of Voter Information and Educational Programs

IFES worked with the IHEC during this reporting period to design voter information and education campaigns related to the CoR elections and the IKR GC elections. IFES encouraged the IHEC to create easily identifiable voter outreach materials in order to ensure that the messages are authoritative and coherent. IFES worked with the various POD Sections on material content, design, and delivery. In addition, IFES assisted in incorporating changes into public outreach that occurred as a result of the switch over to AVR process and introduction of the electronic cards.

3.4.1 Training Program on Voter Education Methodologies and Use of New Media for Public Outreach

As a result of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Association of Journalists that the IHEC signed on March 17, 2014, the Head of the Media Department requested IFES' assistance to provide training to journalists on media coverage related to the upcoming CoR elections.

To assist the IHEC Media Section in preparing for three media workshops ahead of the CoR elections, IFES organized the Training of Trainers Media Workshop that took place in Erbil on March 27-29. Ten IHEC BRIDGE trainers and media staff from the NO and GEOs were in attendance. The purpose of the workshop was to train the trainers on the election law and new regulations, the electoral system and seat allocation process, OCV procedures, electronic cards, AVR process, the duties and responsibilities of both the IHEC and accredited media in light of the recent changes to the laws of journalists, and how to develop the agendas and the training material for the journalists workshops. The workshop targeted the IHEC trainers who will be responsible for training the journalists and aimed to increase the capacity of the IHEC to provide training using the BRIDGE methodology.

The External Relations Advisor provided considerable input into the design of the agenda, selection of the materials, and evaluation of presentation methodology and style to individual trainers. Comments on the IHEC website were also given. The materials included the IHEC procedures and regulations, international standards, and selected BRIDGE materials. These were included in the handout material for the journalists' workshops.

The two workshops for journalists were planned to take place in Erbil in early April.

3.4.2 Review and Production of Outreach and Voter Information Materials

IFES External Relations Advisor (ERA) assisted the IHEC with printed materials and publications by reviewing and providing feedback for the international observers' handbook and by reviewing and editing the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) which will be posted on the IHEC's website.

IFES provided technical advice on the electronic cards voter education campaign to the Public Outreach Department (POD) on an on-going basis. Assistance has also been provided to the Electoral Media Section during daily meetings on the themes and messaging for the PSAs. IFES provided technical advice on electronic cards voter education campaign to the POD on an on-going basis. Assistance has also been provided to the Electoral Media Section during 'at desk' meetings around the themes and messaging for the PSAs.

The ERA was deployed to the KREO to assist with the IKR GCE public outreach activities. She worked with the Director of the KREO, Head of Media Section, and the production company to discuss the signing of contracts for the production of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to urge eligible voters to cast their ballots on Election Day. The PSAs will focus on motivation, SNV, and IDPs. The PSAs will be provided to the KREO in Arabic so that they can be dubbed into the minority languages required. Advice was also provided to the KREO on an impasse with

contracting with the Kurdish Satellite TV companies and their dispute with the Communications and Media Commission (CMC).

Following IFES' advice, the IHEC and the KREO are inviting accredited international media to the international observers conferences to provide information for the CoR 2014 election in Baghdad and Erbil as both audiences require similar information to report effectively about the elections.

At the request of the IHEC, IFES supported two workshops on accreditation procedures for the IHEC on March 2-3 for domestic and local observers and on March 4-5 for political entities agents. Both workshops introduced the new IHEC procedures to GEOs staff, ensured they were able to undertake the accreditation process within their GEO, and offered an opportunity to discuss rights and responsibilities of observers and some of the obstacles and challenges of the current accreditation processes. The workshops brought together 48 staff and three trainers from the IHEC. IFES ERA provided input into the design of the agenda, supported the facilitators of the workshops, and advised on the registration of domestic observers.

Activity 3.5: Outreach to Political Entities

In FY13, IFES collaborated with the UN to encourage the IHEC to take a more active role in managing its relationship with the political entities. For example, in Q1FY13 IFES supported IHEC's efforts to include political entities in the electoral process.

In the reporting period, as a direct result of the IFES workshop on accreditation procedures for the political entities agents conducted on March 4-5, the IHEC adopted a number of recommendations to increase outreach to political entities. The Public Outreach Department (POD) will develop a central training curriculum to educate the political entities agents and will implement training sessions for the political entities agents. As the public outreach activities have been decentralized and implemented at the GEOs level, the individual GEOs are implementing seminars for the political entities agents.

Following IFES' advice, the IHEC included political parties outreach activities in the strategic communication plan, activities that include development of a training program for the political entities representative in cooperation and coordination with the NO and GEOs; design a cascade training program to target two to three agents from each political entity in order to train them on the DEC procedures to be able to observe the data entry process, and also to get introduced to all the details related to the tallying process and thus to enhance the trust of political entities with the work of the IHEC and reduce the number of complaints; and finally to undertake the process of printing the DEC guide which includes the procedures and the work of the DEC to be distributed to observers and political entities agents when they come to the DEC during the observation period.

Activity 3.7: Civil Society Sub-grants Program

As part of its second round of sub-grants, IFES selected six NGOs from throughout Iraq to implement projects that target women (including rural women, widows, IDPs, disabled and illiterate women); first time voters; youth (including rural youth and youth without IDs); the rural

population; and vulnerable communities (such as widows, IDPs, elderly voters, people with disabilities) as well as the general public.

The projects are implemented in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Basrah, Kirkuk, Dhi Qar, Baghdad, Nineveh, Salah ad Din, Diyala, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit, and Diwaniyah. The total value of the awarded sub-grants is \$595,732. Below is a brief synopsis of the funded projects.

- Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) is an NGO based in Erbil. It was founded in 2004 and works to consolidate women's role in the Iraqi community through enhancing their social, political, economic and cultural participation. Its previous funders include USAID, UNDP, and UNOPS. Under the proposed sub-grant award, WEO aims to target rural women and first time voters in the towns, districts and sub-districts surrounding Erbil to enhance their ability to fully exercise their voting rights and get access to election information. The project will aim to achieve that through electoral awareness sessions, TV and radio shows, targeted text messaging, social media and printed materials distribution. This project includes a focus on the parliamentary and Governorate Council Elections in Kurdistan. Also, the project targets raising awareness about the IHEC call center and the voter cards. The value of the award is \$98,250 (period of performance: September 4, 2013 through May 31, 2014).



Figure 4: Al-Mortaqa local leaders meeting (January 12, 2014)

- Bustan Association for Children Protection and Education is an NGO based in Sulaymaniyah. It was founded in 2003 and works on youth and women's and orphan's rights issues. Its previous funders include UNDP, UNOPS and USAID. Under the proposed sub-grant award, Bustan aims to target youth, students, men, and women in all three Kurdistan governorates to increase knowledge about elections and election processes through a variety of means including outreach and awareness sessions, telecasting of cartoons, and brochure dissemination. This project includes a focus on the parliamentary and Governorate Council Elections in Kurdistan. Also, the project targets raising awareness about the IHEC call center and the voter cards. The value of the award is \$99,393 (period of performance: September 4, 2013 through May 20, 2014).
- Al-Manahil Association for Women Development is an NGO based in Basrah. It was founded in 2005 and works to promote women's rights with a particular focus on women with disabilities, IDPs, and vulnerable women. Its previous funders include the Canadian NGO Equitas, DODs PRTs provincial Reconstruction Teams, and IFES. Under the proposed sub-grant award, Al-Manahil aims to target women (and in particular widows, IDPs, disabled and illiterate women), as well as youth (college students, non-schooled adult youth, rural youth and youth without IDs) to assist them to effectively participate in the electoral process and create a mechanism for the IHEC and civil society to work to raise awareness and understanding of

the electoral process. The project will aim to achieve that through radio talk shows, mock election sessions, and a bus tour campaign. The value of the award is \$56,900 (period of performance: January 2, 2014 through June 2, 2014).

- Foundation of United for Relief and Sustainable Development (FUAD) is an NGO based in Kirkuk. It was founded in 2003 and works in various development areas such as literacy, professional development, infrastructure development, and conflict-resolution. Its previous funders include UNHCR, Mercy Corps, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Under the proposed sub-grant award, FUAD aims to target vulnerable and marginalized groups such as IDPs; the rural population; illiterate women, widows and divorcees; and first time voters to educate them about the electoral process and their rights in that process. The project will aim to achieve that through workshops, film clips, awareness sessions and distribution of educational materials. The value of the award is \$53,139 (period of performance: January 10, 2014 through June 10, 2014).
- South Youth Organization is an NGO based in Dhi Qar. It was founded in 2005 and works on developing civic and political institutions and encouraging NGO, youth, and student capacity-building to promote an Iraqi society that believes in democracy and human rights. Its previous funders include UNESCO, NDI, DAI, and NED. South Youth Organization aims to target first time voters and vulnerable communities (such as widows, IDPs, elderly voters, people with disabilities) as well as the general public to enhance knowledge and understanding of the electoral process, support the exercise of the right to vote by secret ballot, promote the participation of marginalized groups, and promote transparency and democracy by observing the parliamentary elections in Dhi Qar. The project will aim to achieve that through awareness sessions and election observation. The value of the award is \$61,000 (period of performance: January 15 through June 15, 2014).
- Iraqi Al-Mortaqa Foundation for Human Development is an NGO with headquarters based in Baghdad and branch offices in Kirkuk, Salahidin, Karbala, and Basrah, as well as with coordinators in most Iraqi provinces. It was founded in 2005 and works in sustainable development, small business training, women's rights, youth rights and electoral awareness.



Figure 5: Al-Manahil voter education discussion meeting in Basrah's Al-Zubaer Youth Center (February 16, 2014)

Its previous funders include UNIFEM, IRD, UNOPS, Mercy Corps, NDI and IFES. Al-Mortaqa aims to target youth, widows, people with disabilities, as well as the general public to raise awareness about the importance of participating in elections. This is a cross-regional project to be implemented in eight governorates (Baghdad, Nineveh, Salah

ad Din, Diyala, Anbar, Karbala, Wasit, and Diwaniyah). The project will aim to achieve its goals through symposiums, visitor teams, and radio station programs. The value of the award is \$227,050 (period of performance: November 13, 2013 through May 13, 2014).

During the process of implementation of the projects, NGOs collaborated and were in touch with their local GEO offices. For example, WEO reported that they have met with the GEO Erbil branch, which will provide a one-day training to WEO staff as preparation for their further work on electoral awareness sessions. FUAD reported meeting with officials from the GEO office in Kirkuk to discuss the details of their activities. Al-Manahil met with the GEO officials in Basrah, who also participated in their discussion meetings and radio talk shows. Al-Manahil also used IHEC-issued educational materials in the newsletter that they circulate as part of their sub-grant. Al-Mortaga reported GEO staff participation in their activities in Baghdad, Diwaniyah, Kerbala, Wasit and Salahidin.

On March 14, IFES facilitated a meeting amongst WEO and Bustan representatives with KREO officials. The KREO expressed interest in working with the two NGOs on increasing voter's awareness about the use of the new electronic cards, the special voting day in Kurdistan, and the call center, amongst others. As a result, IFES extended the grants for the two organizations with additional funding for the implementation of activities targeting raising awareness about the IHEC Call Center and the electronic voter card.

IFES also shared with the NGOs IHEC voter outreach materials (in Arabic and Kurdish) for use/adaptation for pertinent activities of the NGOs.

IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Table 2: IFES-Facilitated Workshops, May – July 2014²

Workshop title	Targeted group (# of participants)	Venue	Duration	Proposed date
Electoral Campaign Expenditures Workshop	NO, GEOs Political Entities Section Staff	Erbil	2 days	May
Strategic Communications Workshop	NO, GEOs Public Outreach Staff	Erbil	3 days	June
Strategic Planning Workshop	BoC, NO, GEOs	Erbil	3 days	June
Complaints Process Lessons Learnt Workshop	NO, GEOs Complaints Section staff	Erbil	3 days	June
Continuous Voter Registration – AVR process	NO, GEOs Operations Staff	Erbil	3 days	June
HR Management and Development Workshop	NO, GEOs HR Staff	Erbil	3 days	July
IT/ICT Workshop	NO, GEOs IT Section Staff	Erbil	3 days	July

² This chart is indicative of IFES workshops in the next quarter. Dates and content are subject to change pending operational requirements and IHEC approvals.

BRIDGE Boundary Delimitation Workshop	NO, GEOs Operations Staff	Erbil	2 days	July
Training on Political Entity Outreach	NO, GEOs Political Entities Section Staff	Erbil	3 days	July

V. QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

VI. CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS UPDATE

This past quarter presented ESP with no major challenges to its critical assumptions. However, in the months to come this may change, particularly as the elections grow nearer and violence escalates in Anbar and other governorates.

In this political context, the assumption that *major political parties will peacefully and constructively engage in the political process even as they reach decision points over the status of disputed territories; the timing and content of local elections, referenda, and provincial elections; and, other contentious policy issues relevant to the IHEC* was not challenged during the IKR parliamentary elections. To date, there is no evidence to suggest that there will be any challenges during the CoR elections and the IKR GC elections.

In addition, IFES has taken steps to minimize potential challenges to the critical assumption that *IFES staff and consultants will be able to obtain the necessary visas or permits to work in Iraq*. IFES has been able to acquire long-term visas for most of the current staff members, while the others are awaiting the visas to be issued beginning of next quarter. With support of the IHEC, IFES was also able to finally obtain the International Zone badges for most of the international and local national staff members.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

IFES' accomplishments in Q2FY14 continue with the successful implementation of the ESP. IFES has provided essential operational and IT/ITC support to the IHEC during preparations for the CoR and IKR GC elections and was pivotal in the early planning stages of the AVR process.

In addition, IFES provided forums to streamline the public outreach campaign for the CoR elections and corresponding AVR and electronic cards projects. IFES also contributed to the long-term sustainable future of the IHEC by providing assistance in strategic communications, OCV, AVR implementation, and contingency planning for the electoral operations in Anbar. The IHEC management and staff have praised IFES' ability to react quickly to training needs and to implement high quality workshops.

During the next quarter, immediately after the elections results announcement and complaints adjudication, IFES anticipates significant progress on the IHEC strategic planning process and organizational capacity building activities.

Considering this context, two conclusions can be formulated from the past three months of programming. First, with the IHEC's dedication to adopting new technologies in Iraqi elections

including the successful implementation of the first stage of the AVR and distribution of the electronic cards, the Commission once again proved to be capable of conducting smooth and effective preparations for electoral events, and also demonstrated a willingness to implement innovations. This speaks to capacity building and will hopefully lead to a revived commitment to the strategic planning process.

Second, with the overall security situation, which continued to deteriorate as of this reporting quarter, and is not expected to improve prior to the CoR elections, it can be expected that incidents of terrorist attacks and armed conflict will remain high, if not increase.